Making online meeting accessible live captioning

With meetings and events moving online, events organisers lack awareness of online platforms features and constraints, such as automated captioning and its accuracy and usefulness. Many do not possess technical knowledge to deal with perceived complexity of access provision, which can be easily overcome with few tips below and helping with terminology and answers to frequently asked questions.

JARGON BUSTING

What is remote captioning? Remote captioning involves qualified captioner (speech to text reporter) listening in from a **remote** location (usually through the internet or telephone and then the **captions** are sent back in real time and word for word (through the Internet) to the individual via a web-enabled device (such as mobile or laptop) often or a conferencing platform.

What is live captioning? This term is often used to describe automatically generated captions as part of video conferencing platforms. It is also used to describe real time captioning provided by professional captioners or speech to text reporters. We know, this can be confusing!

What is automated captioning? A system often based on Artificial Intelligence that can recognize continuous speech using speech to text software to deliver live captioning. Artificial intelligence, as part of the speech recognition process, will try to match what it recognizes as speech against a vocabulary list of terms. Automated speech recognition (ASR) and their accuracy and usefulness also depends on Wi-Fi, quality of audio in the call, speaker voice, accent and acoustics. Requires needs strict control of one person speaking at one time.

What is speech to text reporting? Speech to text is the process of converting spoken words into written texts. Professional speech to text reporter (captioner) listen to what is being said and simultaneously convert this to text on a screen. This is a verbatim, i.e. word-for-word, account and enables a deaf or hard of hearing person to follow exactly what is being said and to participate on equal basis.

For best user experience NADP recommends engaging speech to text reporters. You can find speech to text reporter in UK by clicking this link https://avsttr.org.uk/

ADVERTISING YOUR EVENT

It is a good practice to you let participants know if you will have captioning/ subtitling supporting your online event or meeting. Doing so will make deaf or hard of hearing participants welcomed. Below is an example of announcement

EVENT NAME

DATE &TIME

This event will live captioning (here share link to streaming service if you are using one)

FAQ & TIPS

Q: Does Teams have live captioning?

A: Yes, Teams has in build automated captioning to provide support during real time live conference calls. It is a responsibility of account holder responsibility to ensure live captioning is enabled by selecting "*disabled but the organiser or user can override".* Please check the reference below:
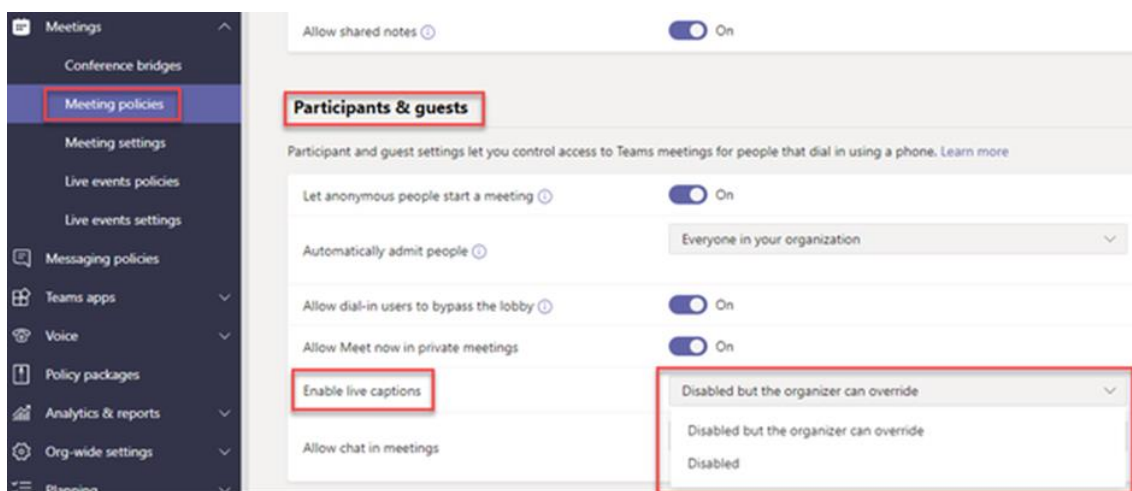
(source: Microsoft)

Q: Does Zoom have live captioning?

A: Zoom does not have in build automated live captioning to support real time meetings but it allows third party access (captioning service) in their platform. This means a participant will be able to activate captioning function in the Zoom and follow conversations directly in the platform. Captioner will be signed up as participant and require host organiser permission to type. It is a Zoom account holder responsibility to ensure captioning is enabled in Zoom Advanced meeting setting. For more information, check this link
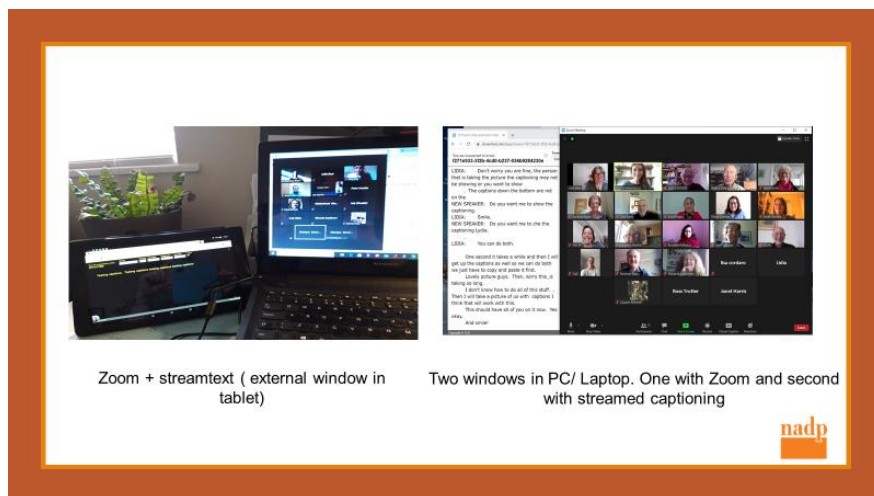https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/207279736-Using-closed-captioning

1. Sign in to the Zoom web portal
2. In the navigation panel, click **Account Management** then **Account Settings**.
3. Click the **Meeting** tab.
4. Verify that **Closed Caption** is enabled.
5. If the setting is disabled, click the toggle to enable it. If a verification dialog displays, click **Turn On** to verify the change.
6. (Optional) If you want to make this setting mandatory for all users in your account, click the lock icon, and then click **Lock** to confirm the setting

(source: Zoom)

Q: Can meeting participants have independent access to remote captioning while in the call?

A: Yes, participants can access remote captioning on second device such as laptop, pad, tablet or smartphone using URL link provided to them by organisers if they are using professional services. Speech to text reporters are familiar in the process and often guide organisers step by step if requested. Most popular service for web based captioning is StreamText, other service providers may have similar independent streaming service. Some users will have two active windows open in their PC, one with conferencing platform and second with captioning text.

Zoom + streamtext (external window in tablet)

Two windows in PC/ Laptop. One with Zoom and second with streamed captioning

Q: Can I use independent automatic captioning service instead?

A: Yes, there are ways of using automated captioning such as web captioner or otter.ai which work independently of any platforms. Some popular platforms also offer integrated automated captioning. NADP does not recommend using automated captioning due to many factors affecting it's accuracy.

Q: Is there any further information I can share with my events team?

A: Yes, your team will appreciate additional details on remote captioning from a new standard from International Telecommunication Union (ITU) called " An overview of remote captioning services".

Q: How is captioner connected to a conference call?

A: Captioner can be connected to a conference call as a participant or just joining by audio (call). Once connected, captioner will hear discussion between participants and immediately provide raw real time transcript directly to participants devices via URL link.

Q: How can I make sure captioning service is secure?

A: If you have additional security concerns, you need to run a server with the WebRTC application. It can't just run as standalone HTML. WebRTC provides mechanisms for streaming text via its data APIs. However, use of these for streaming text has not been standardized, and if streaming is possible at all, it will vary from service to service.
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